

**COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

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**REPORT OF THE HELSINKI COMMISSION
ON
THE U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION VISIT
TO
STOCKHOLM, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, ESTONIA AND MOSCOW
(CODEL HOYER)**

FEBRUARY 9-15, 1991

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. OBJECTIVES

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe decided to visit Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in mid-February 1991 and to meet with their freely-elected leaders and government officials for one paramount purpose: in the context of a fact-finding mission, to express U.S. Congressional support for Baltic aspirations in the wake of the bloodshed in Lithuania and Latvia in January, when Soviet Internal Affairs Ministry troops killed 18 unarmed civilians.

The delegation was the first group of Members of the U.S. Congress to visit the Baltics since those events. The unusually large size of the delegation -- it comprised 13 Members and was the largest Congressional delegation ever to visit the Baltic States in the fifty years since their forcible incorporation into the Soviet Union -- and the broad geographic range of the Members' home districts testified to widespread backing for the Baltic cause in the U.S. Congress and among the American people, despite preoccupation in the United States with the military campaign in the Persian Gulf.

The delegation's other objective was to meet with Boris Yeltsin, chairman of the parliament of the Russian Federation, and was directly connected to the primary objective of voicing support for the Baltic cause. Yeltsin had publicly condemned the use of force in Lithuania and Latvia, even calling on Russian soldiers to disobey orders to fire on Lithuanians. Members wanted to hear his position on the situation in the Baltic States, the status of their negotiations with Russia, and prospects for democratization in the USSR.

The Members also hoped to arrange a meeting with Soviet President Gorbachev to convey the sense of concern in the U.S. Congress at the resort to violence in January and to express support for continued political and economic liberalization in the Soviet Union. Although President Gorbachev did not meet with the delegation, Soviet authorities did set up a formal meeting in Moscow with Rafik Nishanov, Chairman of the Council of Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet, and his colleagues. The discussion allowed delegation members to familiarize

themselves with the current official Soviet position on the Baltic States' desire to regain their political independence.

II. THE CONTEXT

Stockholm

Chairman Hoyer decided to begin the trip in Stockholm to get the Swedish perspective on developments in the Baltic States. Although Sweden, unlike most Western countries, has recognized the incorporation of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia into the USSR, Sweden has recently -- especially since the bloodshed in January -- taken an increasingly visible and supportive stance on the Baltic issue. For example, an information office has been established in Stockholm for all three Baltic States. In general, the Nordic countries' interest in the Baltic cause has increased noticeably, with Iceland moving towards actual diplomatic recognition of Lithuania.

In Stockholm, the delegation met with Swedish government and parliamentary leaders, including some of their foremost experts on the Baltic States. Members conferred with their Swedish counterparts and Swedish government officials on the current situation and Swedish plans for future action. U.S. Ambassador Charles Redman and U.S. Embassy specialists on the Baltic States also provided insights into Swedish and general Scandinavian involvement in the issue.

The Baltic States

January's violence climaxed a period of growing tensions between the Baltic States and Soviet authorities. In the 1990 elections to republic Supreme Soviets, pro-independence nationalist forces won control of the legislatures of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. On March 11, 1990, the newly-elected parliament in Vilnius reaffirmed Lithuania's independent status, and the Estonian and Latvian legislatures declared transition periods to independence in April and May, respectively. Moscow's resultant economic blockade of Lithuania eventually was lifted and negotiations began. But the talks foundered, with Baltic leaders accusing Soviet officials of delaying tactics and bad faith.

By the end of 1990, Baltic-Soviet relations became even further complicated

by the general crisis of center-republic relations in the USSR and the country's apparent slide towards anarchy and disintegration. President Gorbachev's efforts to stitch the Soviet Union back together by means of a new union treaty had encountered stiff opposition from all the Soviet republics, which demanded enhanced guarantees of their sovereignty. The Baltic States, which consider themselves occupied countries, not Soviet republics, refused to have anything to do with Gorbachev's draft union treaty. With prospects for ratification of the union treaty by republic Supreme Soviets increasingly dubious, Gorbachev, at the fourth Congress of People's Deputies in December 1990 in Moscow, proposed a countrywide referendum on maintaining the USSR as a unified state. In response, the Baltic States, which no longer recognize Soviet law, began to consider holding "counter-referenda" in the form of public opinion surveys to demonstrate support for independence.

Tensions escalated in January, when Soviet authorities announced the dispatch of troops to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to detain Baltic youths who had resisted conscription into the Soviet armed forces. Many observers in the Baltic States and elsewhere feared that, as the January 15 UN deadline approached for Iraq to leave Kuwait and the world's eyes were focused on the Persian Gulf, resurgent hardline forces in the Soviet Union would strike at the Baltic independence movements. On January 13, these fears came true in Lithuania and, one week later, in Latvia, when "Black Beret" troops opened fire on unarmed civilians, killing 18.

The international response was strong and immediate, particularly in the United States, where many Members of Congress denounced the shootings, as well as the denials of responsibility by the highest echelons of the Soviet leadership and the blatantly distorted accounts of the events in the Soviet media. International condemnation of the killings may well have slowed a spiral of repression that could have led to the dissolution of the Baltic parliaments and the introduction of presidential rule.

Given the circumstances, the delegation was pleasantly surprised to receive visas for its visit to the Baltic States -- a visit which came at a time of uneasy quiet amid fears of renewed violence. But the Baltic peoples were also demonstrating their determination to proceed towards independence. The results of Lithuania's February 9 "public opinion poll" on independence -- which had been timed to precede President Gorbachev's referendum on maintaining the Soviet Union, scheduled for March 17 -- revealed overwhelming support for regaining the political independence lost in 1940. Latvia and Estonia also scheduled similar soundings of public opinion for March 3. By visiting all three Baltic States in mid-February,

public opinion for March 3. By visiting all three Baltic States in mid-February, therefore, the delegation was able to consult with Baltic leaders at a particularly important time, and also had the opportunity to hear the views and concerns of non-Baltic peoples on the future status of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

Moscow

The visit to Moscow was motivated primarily by the desire to meet with Boris Yeltsin, who has become one of the key players in Soviet politics. Since his election to the USSR Congress of People's Deputies and Supreme Soviet in 1989, Yeltsin has consistently promoted the decentralization of the Soviet Union and urged market-oriented economic reform. As chairman of the legislature of the Russian Federation since May 1990, Yeltsin has become widely viewed as a lightning rod for pro-democratization political activists in the USSR. He strongly condemned the violence in Lithuania and Latvia, and has also pursued, on behalf of the Russian Federation, treaties on political, economic and cultural cooperation with the Baltic States. These treaties appear to recognize the sovereignty of the Baltic States.

Having received an invitation to visit Moscow from the Russian Republic, the delegation also requested a meeting with President Gorbachev. There was no response to that request before the delegation's arrival in Moscow, but Members received confirmation of a meeting with officials of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

The Moscow leg of the trip began with a briefing by U.S. Ambassador Jack Matlock. He discussed the situation in the Baltic States, the current status of President Gorbachev and his rivalry with Boris Yeltsin, the correlation of forces between reformers and hardliners, and the U.S. government position on, and perception of, the Soviet-Baltic confrontation.

The Members then headed to the USSR Supreme Soviet for an exchange of views with Rafik Nishanov, who has been actively involved in the talks between Baltic and Soviet leaders. An eye-opening and sobering discussion ensued, as Nishanov and his colleagues displayed the resurgent strength of hardline forces in the USSR. Members were struck by the tendency of their Soviet interlocutors to denounce foreign attempts to "interfere in the internal affairs of a sovereign state." The Soviet participants claimed that the Baltic legislatures had passed laws violating the human rights of ethnic minorities. They denounced the violence in January but argued that discriminatory Baltic actions had evoked the anxiety of minority populations and warned against U.S. efforts to "dictate" policy to the Soviet government.

A totally different atmosphere surrounded the delegation's meeting with Boris Yeltsin, which, following the discussion with Nishanov, starkly illuminated the differences between Soviet reformers and hardliners. The meeting was Yeltsin's first meeting with high-level U.S. representatives since the fall of 1990. In the interim, relations between a Russian Republic demanding sovereignty and the Soviet central authorities had deteriorated, hopes for an agreement between Gorbachev and Yeltsin on a radical economic reform program had dissipated and the power struggle between them had grown ever more bitter. Yeltsin's public stand against the violence in the Baltic States had drawn particularly bitter reproaches from hardliners, especially in the military.

Yeltsin repeated to the delegation his condemnation of the bloodshed in Lithuania and Latvia, and argued that statements of protest by the Russian Federation -- including direct contacts with the United Nations -- had sheltered the Baltic States from further aggression. He also saw the delegation's visit as a "justified and necessary step," assuring the Balts of their rights as sovereign republics. Not surprisingly, Yeltsin emphasized the need for U.S. policy makers to shift their attention to the Soviet republics, instead of concentrating on Mikhail Gorbachev and central Soviet institutions. He urged that Washington establish direct relations with Russia, which, under Yeltsin, rejects any rollback of political and economic reform, and intends to proceed towards democratization.

Members were reassured by Yeltsin's denunciation of the violence in the Baltic States and were intrigued by his vision of a restructured union of republics enjoying genuine sovereignty. Yeltsin, for his part, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet with Members, said he would welcome an official invitation to visit the U.S., and indicated that April 1991 would be the most convenient time.

III. CONCLUSIONS

The delegation expressed strong support for the Baltic cause by traveling to each of the Baltic States for on-site meetings and other activities. All the Baltic leaders with whom the delegation met -- as well as political activists who oppose Baltic independence -- voiced their gratitude to the Members for having taken the time and trouble to familiarize themselves with the situation.

Members, for their part, in the Baltic parliaments and at press conferences, voiced their strong support for the aspirations of the Baltic people for self-determination. It was in the Baltic parliaments, especially in Vilnius, that Members also had the opportunity to observe at first hand democracy under siege: concrete and metal barricades surrounding legislatures; sandbags stacked inside; and the

smoke of bonfires lit to warm those who maintain a continuous vigil around legislatures born in the first multi-party elections in the Baltic States since 1940. By visiting the parliaments at an especially tense moment, in the aftermath of violence and in an atmosphere of concern about the future, the delegation made a strong statement of solidarity with those committed to democracy.

The delegation also expressed support for the steps undertaken by President Gorbachev toward democratization and greater personal freedom in the Soviet Union. The delegation expressed the hope that this course of reform would continue, and that the differences between the Union and Baltic States would be resolved through peaceful negotiations.

Of the many impressions generated by the trip, there were several that stood out:

o As Baltic leaders stressed, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are occupied countries and the Baltic problem is not an "internal Soviet matter" but an international problem. Unless this bitter legacy of World War II is resolved, the Cold War cannot justly be considered over. As an international problem, it requires an international solution, preferably in the form of a conference. Members were deeply impressed by the obvious determination of the Baltic peoples to pursue their objective by peaceful, democratic means.

o In tactical terms, Baltic leaders advised Members that the United States should support Boris Yeltsin and develop direct relations with the Russian Federation. They appeared to place great emphasis on their links with Soviet republics, especially Russia, which they viewed as the best hope of forestalling any regression towards centralization, arbitrariness, lawlessness and the use of force to resolve political problems.

o The discussions with representatives of non-Baltic peoples gave Members insights into the political and ethnic dynamics of the Baltic problem. They heard of concerns about discrimination, second-class status and parliamentary processes, but they also met with non-Baltic people who support Baltic independence. Chairman Hoyer concluded, in response to a question posed at the delegation's final press conference in Moscow, that the problem in the Baltic States was primarily political, not ethnic, in nature.

o Members had a chance to hear spokesmen of the resurgent hardline forces, both in the Baltic States -- exemplified by Alfreds Rubiks, head of the pro-Moscow Latvian Communist Party -- and in Moscow, where Rafik Nishanov and his

colleagues resurrected pre-perestroika rhetoric in their explanations of the violence in Lithuania and Latvia. It was clear to Members that, after several years of assuming that the Soviet Union would follow a straight and easy line towards democratization, a battle has now been joined between adherents of continued reform and those dedicated to turning back the clock.

o The outcome of this historic struggle is by no means certain, which lends particular resonance to the warnings of Baltic leaders that Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia are still in danger and that continuous monitoring of the situation by Western governments is critical. The course of the impending negotiations between the teams recently appointed by President Gorbachev and each of the Baltic States will reveal much about Soviet intentions and the prospects for peacefully resolving this issue.

o If democratization and decentralization in the Soviet Union are to continue, Boris Yeltsin will be a key player, both as the leading politician of the largest Soviet republic and as the foremost symbol of republic sovereignty. Members felt that establishing contact between the U.S. Congress and Yeltsin was an important accomplishment of the trip, especially since Yeltsin has come under severe pressure from Soviet hardliners and he clearly values and needs visible expressions of support from Western parliamentarians.

The delegation concluded that specific steps should be taken by the United States to expand and solidify its support for the Baltic States. These include:

-- establishing an American presence, such as information offices, in each of the Baltic States to serve as a form of political recognition and support;

-- channeling U.S. government humanitarian aid and economic assistance, as well as private sector humanitarian aid, to the Baltic States directly;

-- recognizing and establishing direct contacts with the parliaments of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia as the legitimate, freely-elected and democratic representatives of the peoples of the Baltic States; and

-- proposing and seeking support for observer status for the Baltic States in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) at the next CSCE meeting of foreign ministers.



VISIT TO STOCKHOLM

February 10-11, 1991

I. OBJECTIVES

Because Sweden has played a leading role among Western European nations in demonstrating support for the democratically-elected Baltic parliaments and their pursuit of independence, Chairman Hoyer selected Stockholm as the stopover destination en route to the Baltic States and Moscow. In Sweden a 24-hour long program, which included briefings by leading Swedish specialists on Soviet affairs, as well as discussions with parliamentarians who had recently returned from the Baltic States and other Swedish officials knowledgeable about the Baltics, provided the delegation with an enhanced understanding of events in the Baltics and Soviet policy from an historic as well as current perspective.

From these meetings, the delegation learned that prominent members of the Swedish government have frequently voiced their strong support for the Baltic cause, and that the Swedish government has also taken concrete steps, such as the establishment of branch offices of its Leningrad Consulate in Riga, Latvia, and Tallinn, Estonia and a soon-to-be-opened Information Office in Vilnius, Lithuania. Additionally, Sweden has backed the creation of a Baltic Information Office in Stockholm which facilitates visits by Baltic officials to Stockholm. In an on-going gesture of solidarity with their fellow Baltic legislators, Swedish parliamentarians have actively participated in the campaign to keep a continuous presence of Nordic parliamentarians in the Baltic States.

II. MEETINGS

Shortly after arriving in the late afternoon of February 10, the delegation attended a reception at Ambassador Redman's residence where Sweden's Moderate Party leader, Carl Bildt, discussed his impressions drawn from a recent trip to the Baltics as well as conclusions derived from his personal association with well-informed residents of the Baltic States. In Bildt's view, the Soviet Union embarked on its repressive policy toward the Baltics in the fall of 1990, and, recognizing the depth of Baltic commitment to independence, will continue the imposition of an increasingly repressive policy, similar to the one undertaken in Hungary in 1948, rather than the military assault there in 1956. In order to demonstrate western support for the Baltic parliaments, Bildt emphasized the importance of maintaining a western presence in the region.

Bildt explained that Sweden would postpone official recognition of the Baltic States until the traditional preconditions of legal recognition have been met. Until then, Sweden lends encouragement to the Baltic independence movements through its establishment of branches of its Leningrad consulates in Latvia and Estonia. Responding to the Lithuanian unwillingness to accept an extension of official Soviet-Swedish relations, which in its view would be implicit in the establishment of a branch consular office in Vilnius, the Swedes will instead open an information office in that city soon. Bildt referred to this process as one of "creeping recognition."

Following the reception, CSCE Chairman and delegation head Steny Hoyer hosted a dinner which was attended by several delegation members and Estonian Foreign Minister Lennart Meri, senior Swedish parliamentary advisor Tomas Bertelman and Director of the Stockholm Institute for Soviet and East European Economics Andrus Aslund.

Foreign Minister Meri commented that bilateral defense agreements between the Soviet Union and Estonia could alleviate Moscow's security concerns. In Bertelman's view, the Soviet crackdown in the Baltics has served to increase support for the independence movement, particularly in Lithuania. Aslund, addressing the issue of Soviet retrenchment, suggested that Gorbachev, with support from the KGB and the military, would continue his cautious pursuit of reform while attempting to maintain social order. Citing a comparison between Gorbachev and Poland's Jaruzelski, Aslund predicted that after several years of retrenchment, pressures generated by glasnost and perestroika would lead to a new era of reform and democratization.

On the morning of February 11, the delegation participated in a round-table discussion, led by Acting Under Secretary for Political Affairs Carl Vilhelm Wohler, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. MFA officials asserted that two years ago a confederation plan might have been acceptable to the Baltic States; now the Soviets are faced with a stark choice between complete independence and repression.

Gorbachev's attempt to steer a "middle" course reflects the sharp movement of the "middle" of the central government to the right of the political spectrum. Furthermore, in the opinion of the MFA representatives, the only alternative to Gorbachev is dissolution of the union.

Echoing Moderate Party leader Bildt, MFA representatives explained Sweden's refusal to recognize independence of the Baltic States. Like the recent establishment of Sweden's consular branch offices in Tallinn and Riga, an increasing

number of visits to the Baltic capitals by Swedish parliamentarians demonstrates the importance Sweden places on tracking events in the Baltics and showing its support for the independence movements. Sweden has also utilized CSCE to express concern and urge the application of CSCE principles for the peaceful resolution of the differences between the Baltic States and the Soviet Union. Through these actions, Swedish government policy reflects the strong public sentiment which backs the independence movements.

The delegation proceeded to a luncheon hosted by Rigstag Speaker Thage Peterson and attended by Council of Europe (COE) President Anders Bjorck, Nordic Council Vice President and former Swedish Foreign Minister Karin Soder, Vice Speaker Ingegerd Troedsson and other representatives of all of Sweden's major political parties. COE President Bjorck noted that Baltic representatives warn against accepting Soviet entreaties to give them sufficient time to work out the Baltic problems when in fact the Soviets would use extended delays to veil an increasingly repressive policy.

Swedish parliamentarians, whose visits to the Baltics have served as a tool of Swedish support for the legitimacy of the Baltic parliaments, noted that those parliamentarians, who had observed the February 9 Lithuanian referendum, reported that voting had proceeded unhindered and calmly.

Bjorck also said that several national entities, such as Slovenia and Armenia, had recently requested COE membership and that other similar applications from other Eastern European nationalities were anticipated. Karin Soder concluded the meeting by characterizing environmental concerns as the embryo of the Baltic independence movement and noting that environmental issues in the region remain a primary Swedish concern.

In addition to its meetings with Swedish officials, members of the delegation participated in the public rally held every Monday in central Stockholm to show support for the Baltic independence movement. Chairman Hoyer, joined by Representative Don Ritter, the Commission's ranking House Minority Member, emphasized U.S. sympathy for the Baltic cause and gave assurances that the Gulf war had not diminished U.S. awareness of their perilous situation. The delegation's appearance at the rally received extensive coverage by the Swedish media.

At the delegation's press conference, held shortly before departing for Riga, Chairman Hoyer noted that the visit to the Baltic States would be the first by an official U.S. delegation since the January bloodshed in Lithuania and Latvia. He also expressed support for the Baltic peoples' pursuit of self-determination in

accordance with their rights under the Helsinki Final Act. In conclusion, Chairman Hoyer and Representative Ritter stated that they would use meetings with Yeltsin and, if possible Gorbachev, to express the concern of the U. S. Congress about the Soviet use of violence in the Baltic States, and convey their support for the Baltic cause.

VISIT TO LATVIA, LITHUANIA AND ESTONIA
February 11-14, 1991

I. OBJECTIVES

The Helsinki Commission decided to organize a Congressional delegation to visit the Baltic States at a time when world attention was focused on the crisis in the Persian Gulf. The Commission believed that a visit to the Baltics at this time would demonstrate the concern of the Congress and the American people about a crisis which is likely to be of greater long-range importance to the United States and the CSCE participating states: the determination of the Baltic States to attain their independence from the Soviet Union in the context of the broader conflict between the center and the republics of the USSR. The trip was planned as both a fact-finding mission and as a visible sign of support for the democratic aspirations of the peoples of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

In planning for the trip, it was also decided that the delegation should enter the Baltics directly, rather than by way of Moscow, and that it should make a separate and distinct visit to each of the three Baltic States individually. These objectives required that the delegation fly in to the Baltics by commercial airline from Stockholm, and that bus transportation be utilized for travel from one Baltic State to the other.

Although other individual Members of Congress and groups of two or three had visited one or the other of the Baltic capitals in the past, this delegation of 13 Members and an equal number of staff was by far the largest Congressional delegation to visit the Baltic States in the 50 years since their forcible incorporation into the Soviet Union. The objective, to meet on the scene with each of the freely-elected leaderships of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, was successfully met due to the excellent cooperation given the Commission by Baltic-American groups, the parliaments of the three Baltic States, the U.S. State Department, and the American Consulate General in Leningrad, all of whom helped in setting up this trip in record time. In addition, Consul General Richard Miles accompanied the delegation throughout the three-day stay in the Baltics, and a consular officer was stationed in each of the three Baltic capitals visited.

II. THE CONTEXT

The immediate catalyst for the visit was the highly-charged political situation in the Baltics in January 1991 as a result of the deployment of Soviet military force into the area and the bloody crackdown by "Black Beret" troops in Vilnius and Riga which left 18 unarmed civilians dead and scores wounded. The Commission had been especially active in the immediate period after this violence, addressing its concerns and recommendations for U.S. policy actions to the President and Secretary of State and holding three hearings in the space of three weeks. The Commission heard expert testimony on January 17 from Assistant Secretary of State Raymond Seitz and on January 22 from Lithuanian Vice President Bronius Kuzmickas and Latvian Vice President Dainis Ivans on the Soviet crackdown in the Baltic States, and on February 6 from Professor Zbigniew Brzezinski, Professor Marshall Goldman and General William Odom on the crisis in the Soviet Union. In many ways the trip was the logical consequence of this activity and, as well, a positive response to an appeal from the Baltics for the democratic parliaments of the world to send representatives to the Baltics, both to show solidarity and to experience for themselves the nature of the crisis.

III. MEETINGS

Riga, Latvia
Tuesday, February 12, 1991

The official program for the visit to Latvia began the morning of February 12, following the delegation's arrival in Riga the night before from Stockholm. The arrival itself provided clear evidence that it is Soviet authorities, rather than local officials, who control the borders of the Baltic States, as Soviet KGB border guards insisted on separating delegation members with "official" passports from those holding diplomatic passports while the Latvian official welcoming party stood by helplessly.

Meeting with Anatolijs Gorbunovs, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Latvia

Chairman Gorbunovs received the delegation in the heavily barricaded parliament building and welcomed the presence of 13 members of the United States Congress as a sign of solidarity with the parliament of Latvia. In his opening remarks he stated that western outrage and pressure had been instrumental in lessening the threat of further violence after the bloodshed in Riga on January 20.

A constant theme of what followed, a theme repeated in nearly every meeting with the Baltic leaders, was that focusing such pressure and public attention on the events which transpired in the Baltic States was one of the best services the West could render.

Gorbunovs then provided a short history of events since the May 4, 1990 declaration of Latvian sovereignty. Emphasizing the impossibility of political independence without economic independence, he pointed out that Latvia, through parliamentary legislation, now lives under its own tax and budget system. Also, both Latvia and Estonia have "normalized" the pricing system, starting with rises in the price of food. Such price rises have not been popular; indeed, they are dangerous for the government. However, according to Chairman Gorbunovs, the result is that food is available, even if people do complain about the high prices.

Further developments of the last several months include the formation of the Baltic Council, a consultative body made up of the Chairmen of the Supreme Councils (presidents), the Prime Ministers and the Foreign Ministers of the three states. The purpose of the Council is the coordination of economic and political issues connected with establishing independence.

Commenting on projected negotiations with Moscow on the details of independence, Gorbunovs was pessimistic, characterizing them as "talks about talks." In order for talks to succeed, they must begin with the acceptance of Latvia's independence as "given" and proceed with genuine negotiations about the step-by-step actualization of that independence.

After these comments Chairman Gorbunovs turned to the subject of how the United States might best help the cause of Latvian independence. First, he asked for support for an international conference on the Baltics as the last unresolved issue of World War II, a conference in which, for example, the Allies, Germany and the three Baltic States might participate. Gorbunovs said that he realizes that diplomatic recognition will only be possible after resolution of basic issues between the Baltics and the Soviet Union; however, he requested that an immediate step be taken by the United States Congress to recognize the democratically-elected parliaments of the Baltic States as the supreme legislative bodies in those states. Further, he requested that any economic or humanitarian aid be given directly to the republics, not through Moscow. He pointed out that such direct humanitarian aid had already begun in the case of medical assistance. Finally, he asked that the United States send observers to monitor the Latvian plebiscite on independence scheduled for March 3. Chairman Hoyer replied that the Helsinki Commission would send members of its staff for this purpose, and would also attempt to enlist

other American observers.

Meeting with Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis

Prime Minister Godmanis was accompanied by: Viktors Skudra, Minister of Justice; Aloizs Vaznis, Minister of the Interior; and Sandra Kalniete, Acting Foreign Minister. Godmanis opened his remarks by stating that the major problem facing the Latvian government was economic in nature. The core of the problem is the fact that much of Latvian industry is a part of the Moscow controlled all-union enterprise system. Extricating Latvia from this web of inefficiency and establishing republic control over the country's resources is of prime importance. To this end Latvia is entering into bilateral agreements at the republic level and, in many instances, at the factory or enterprise level. Godmanis asserted that the vast differences in the level of economic and democratic-political development in the individual republics makes doing business at the all-union level not just difficult but impossible.

One of the first steps to be taken in order to reinstate a healthy economy, according to Godmanis, is the institution of Latvia's own monetary system. To achieve this the government has undertaken a broad, five-step economic policy. The policy includes: the creation of a tax system; the adoption of Latvia's own budget; price reforms (already done in many areas by eliminating government price supports); the creation of a financial system with Latvian currency (through an intermediate stage using scrip or "white money"); and a privatization program which would return not only agricultural land but industry and business as well to private hands. (land reform has already created over 7,000 private farms).

Continuing to delineate areas of the economy in need of attention, Godmanis mentioned foreign trade matters and, in particular, the importance of Latvia's two ports, Liepaja and Ventspils. Taking control of these facilities would substantially enhance Latvia's balance of payments, especially in its trade with the Soviet Union, which would then have to pay Latvia for the use of these Baltic ports on which it relies heavily for the export of hard currency-earning items.

Godmanis then proceeded to discuss briefly the matter of Soviet military presence in Latvia. Clearly Latvia wishes to see a reduction of such forces and foresees the establishment of its own national defense force. However, Godmanis agreed that the Soviet Union has legitimate security interests in the area and further stated that Latvia was ready to negotiate on the existence of Soviet military bases on its soil as provided for by international bilateral treaty agreement. Furthermore,

a commission to examine the situation and to try to define the terms of such a Soviet military presence had already been established.

In the ensuing question and answer period, Prime Minister Godmanis elaborated further on a number of the points he had made previously and listened, rather non-committally, to a strong request made by Representative Lantos, Ritter and Smith that Latvia refrain from taxing aid from religious organizations abroad. Finally, in reply to a question as to what the delegation should raise in a possible meeting with President Gorbachev, Godmanis replied that a strong message not to use force and not to order (or permit) force to be used to settle political questions should be delivered to the Soviet leader.

Justice Minister Skudra concluded the meeting by adding a few remarks about what he characterized as a "War of the Laws" between Latvia and the center. This struggle, according to the minister, has its roots in two problems. The first is the center's refusal to recognize the Latvian Republic's right to assert the supremacy of its constitution on its own soil. Secondly, the Soviet constitution is itself flawed by including internal contradictions which give rise to legal conflicts with the republics, even those which recognize that they are constituent parts of the union.

Meeting With Alfreds Rubiks, First Secretary of the Latvian Communist Party

First Secretary Rubiks met the delegation accompanied by several other secretaries of the Party's Central Committee, the First Secretary of the Riga Party committee and two journalists, none of whom made any comment during the meeting. Rubiks spoke for the better part of an hour giving his and, presumably, Moscow's version of the situation in the Baltics. In the course of his monologue he referred over and over to the "crisis" in Latvia, to the "increasingly critical situation" and to the "dangerously increased tension." According to Rubiks, the current state of crisis (including the eruption of violence in January) is due exclusively to the activity of the Popular Front majority in Parliament and the government appointed by it. Rubiks defended the incorporation of Latvia into the Soviet Union and said that fifty years of sending representatives to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the thorough integration of the Latvian economy into that of the Soviet Union only served to further legitimize the Soviet claim that Latvia was legally a part of the union and that the Soviet constitution had primary authority in Latvia. He tried to characterize virtually all legislative activity of the current Latvian Parliament as unconstitutional.

Rubiks further complained that the rights of minorities were being trampled on by the parliamentary majority because Rubiks' opposition faction (approximately 27 percent) had no role in determining government policy. When quizzed about the rights of minority factions in the pre-reform days, Rubiks replied candidly that the matter never came up because the Communist Party did not allow any opposition in those days.

It was at this point that Rubiks began a long assessment of the crisis in Latvia, blaming the Popular Front faction for virtually all the country's ills and for creating a situation in which "fascist powers" could assert themselves. He also declared that the projected March 3 plebiscite on Latvian independence was illegal and unconstitutional, although he did say that he would welcome commission observers for both the March 3 plebiscite and the March 17 all-union referendum.

When delegation members pressed Rubiks about the killings in Riga on January 20 and about who was responsible for the activity of the "Black Berets" who carried out that violence, he equivocated, stating that it was not at all clear that anyone gave them an order to do what they did, that there were rumors (currently under investigation) of a "third force" being responsible, and, finally, alleging that the "Black Beret" forces had been provoked by the rape of the wife of one of their officers. Rubiks was equally unforthcoming when asked by Chairman Hoyer about the status of the so-called "National Salvation Committee" and his role in such a committee. He evaded Representative Ritter's question about whether he was the head of the committee by saying that there are many leaders. He further stated that he would not name any members and could not tell the delegation how many of the members of the committee were members of the Communist Party. Furthermore, he attempted to differentiate the Latvian organization which is officially called the "Committee for Societal Salvation" from the similarly named Lithuanian organization, declaring that the Latvian organization had been in existence for nearly a year and had not been formed as a result of the current crisis.

In conclusion, after repeated questions from delegation members, Rubiks said that the Communist Party of Latvia and the "Committee for Societal Salvation" had publicly stated that they oppose the use of military force in order to settle issues in the Baltics.

Other Meetings and Activities in Riga

Following the delegation's meeting with Chairman Gorbunovs, Chairman Hoyer addressed a plenary session of the Supreme Council (parliament) of Latvia (see Appendix A). The delegation then broke up into four working groups for

discussions on human rights, parliamentary majority/minority issues, religion and ethnic minorities. The first group met with Andrejs Pantelejevs, Chairman of the Supreme Council's Commission on Human Rights and Nationalities Issues and with Aivars Endzins, Chairman of the Council's Rules Commission. The second group met with Janis Dinevics, Chairman of the majority Popular Front faction in the Supreme Council and with Sergey Dimanis, Chairman of the minority "Equal Rights" faction loyal to Moscow. The third group met with representatives of religious denominations in Latvia (Lutheran, German Lutheran, Baptist, Old Believer, Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Jewish), while the fourth group met with representatives of the various ethnic minority associations. In the afternoon the delegation placed flowers at Riga's Freedom Memorial and held a press conference prior to a banquet hosted by Chairman Gorbunovs.

Vilnius, Lithuania
Wednesday, February 12, 1991

Meeting with Vytautas Landsbergis, President of the Supreme Council of Lithuania

The delegation met with President Landsbergis and members of the Presidium of the Lithuanian Parliament in the heavily fortified parliament building. After leaving the bus which had brought the delegation to Vilnius, it was necessary first to traverse an outer perimeter of massive concrete obstructions to tank traffic, then walk about two hundred yards to another wall of steel and concrete surrounding the building itself. Upon entering the building it was still necessary to negotiate a path through several mazes of sand bags before reaching the room where the meeting was held.

President Landsbergis was accompanied by all three Lithuanian Vice Presidents: Kazimieras Motieka (who had accompanied the delegation on the bus ride from the Latvia-Lithuanian border; Bronius Kuzmickas (who had testified before the Helsinki Commission only three weeks before); and Ceslovas Stankievicius. Landsbergis opened his welcoming remarks with the statement that the delegation had arrived at a time when Lithuania stands on a "line between peace and violence, between democracy and totalitarianism." He praised the great tradition of democracy in the United States from the very beginning of the republic. He continued by saying that he had prepared a letter for each delegation member with specific requests for help for Lithuania and then ended his brief opening

remarks stating that "We will hope for more resolute, more important steps from the United States after your visit."

Chairman Hoyer replied to President Landsbergis' remarks with a statement that the delegation had come precisely at that time because the members felt it important that the crisis in the Persian Gulf not draw attention away from the momentous and tragic events which had recently played out in Lithuania and Latvia. Hoyer noted that the entire delegation was impressed with the level of participation and the results of the plebiscite on Lithuanian independence held just four days before the delegation's arrival in Vilnius. Senator D'Amato joined Chairman Hoyer in his assessment of the importance of events in the Baltics and asked for an open, frank statement as to how the United States could be of greater help to Lithuania.

Landsbergis replied that "we are still in great danger," and went on to say that "Lithuania needs concrete, real political protection from the United States." He continued that no Soviet troops had been withdrawn from buildings they had occupied by force, adding to the danger. Landsbergis asked for a declaration that the Soviets have no legal rights in Lithuania, that every action of Soviet power is the action of an aggressive occupier, and, finally, that the conflict in Lithuania and the Baltics in general is not an internal problem of the Soviet Union but rather the last unsolved international problem of World War II. According to Landsbergis, the notion that World War II or the Cold War has ended is an illusion, until the fate of the Baltics is settled. For this reason Landsbergis asked for the delegation's assistance in urging U.S. government support for a conference on the fate of all the Baltic States as the last victims of World War II. He further stated that such a conference should be held in an international forum similar to the "Two plus Four" talks on Germany or in the context of the CSCE, declaring that there was little hope for serious, genuine negotiations if Lithuania had to enter into such talks alone with "such a great, crude power as the Soviet Union."

Since time did not permit serious consideration of the many comments and questions directed to President Landsbergis by other members of the delegation, all of whom were interested in hearing more from him, he requested a little time to prepare answers and promised to have them ready at lunch.

Later, during the luncheon hosted by the Presidium of the Lithuanian Parliament, Landsbergis offered further suggestions as to how the cause of democracy and freedom in Lithuania could be helped. He asked specifically that the United States support Boris Yeltsin by instituting direct relationships with the Russian Republic, thereby strengthening Yeltsin's position and making it easier for him and his government to treat directly with Lithuania as it has already done with

Latvia and Estonia. In dealing with President Gorbachev and the USSR, Landsbergis said that the basic issue was sovereignty. In 1940, the Soviet Union had written Lithuania into its constitution much as Saddam Hussein wrote Kuwait into Iraq's. If only the Soviets would recognize that Lithuania is not in the Soviet Union, then truly important issues like transport, Soviet military presence in Lithuania, and economic relations could be discussed rationally and fruitfully. Referring to this issue of sovereignty, Landsbergis requested that the United States Congress pass a resolution recognizing the exclusive rights of the Lithuanian constitution on Lithuanian soil and that it push for a recognition of Lithuanian sovereignty in international fora like CSCE openly and not "behind closed doors."

Landsbergis then turned to the subject of Soviet military conscription of Lithuanian youth, and the pursuit and prosecution for desertion of those who refuse to serve. He said that such activity is specifically prohibited by the Geneva Conventions if the Soviet Army is properly viewed as an occupying force, and criticized Western protests against Soviet conscription as "not strong enough."

Landsbergis expressed the hope that the U.S. Congress would join other parliaments in sending Members to Vilnius on a more frequent basis to serve as a "significant sign of support" for Lithuania and a deterrent to further acts of violence by the Soviet authorities.

As the luncheon concluded, Landsbergis informed the delegation that three Soviet military officers (members of the "Shield" organization) had been arrested by the military and KGB in Vilnius the previous evening after reporting on an independent investigation of the January 13 bloodletting. The report had implicated the local military command and the Lithuanian Communist Party in an attempt to overthrow the Lithuanian government. Landsbergis asked for the delegation's help in freeing these men (one of whom was a parliamentarian of the Russian Republic) by raising this incident at its meetings in Moscow.

Meeting with Gedyminas Vagnoris, Prime Minister of Lithuania

Prime Minister Vagnoris welcomed the delegation, expressing thanks that the Members had taken time to come to the Baltics during the Persian Gulf crisis. In his opening remarks he made reference to the recently conducted plebiscite in which the Lithuanian people had voted overwhelmingly for independence. He went on to say that governments can change and governmental tactics can change but that the will of the people cannot be changed, and that the Lithuanian people clearly demand their freedom and independence. Vagnoris stated that reforms are

proceeding in Lithuania but that, from an economic perspective, times are extremely difficult and will remain so for a while, since the Soviets have a monopoly on all the resources used in the Lithuanian industrial economy. He stated further that political freedom is only possible through the progression to a market economy. To accomplish this, the Lithuanians want to see further democratization in the Soviet Union, since they realize that any change there will have its positive impact on Lithuania. The use of force by the Soviet Union to work its will in Lithuania will, however, signal the death of the democratic movement in the Soviet Union itself.

In reply to a question about the future of the economic relationship between Lithuania and the Soviet Union, Vagnoris characterized the relationship as extremely complex but said that Lithuania is slowly succeeding in changing its nature. Enterprises on Lithuanian soil are now subject to Lithuanian law, which has been accomplished by an exertion of the will of the people in the absence of military force to back up these laws. Bilateral agreements are being signed at the republic level and at the level of individual enterprises. A healthy economic relationship with eastern markets will be very important to the economic health of Lithuania, and, according to Vagnoris, the Lithuanians understand this and desire it. However, in addition to maintaining a relationship with the East, there is also a crucial need to open markets in hard currency areas.

Vagnoris addressed a number of other questions, including the state of negotiations with Moscow, about which he expressed pessimism. When asked about Lithuania's survival if Moscow does not negotiate seriously, he stated that Lithuania will succeed unless Moscow can isolate it from its markets. If this happens, Lithuania will have been turned into a giant concentration camp, a foretaste of which was experienced last spring during the economic boycott. Vagnoris concluded his remarks, answering a question from Representative Smith, by requesting specific humanitarian medical aid and asking that direct economic relationships be undertaken with appropriate U.S. government agencies.

Other Meetings and Activities in Vilnius

During the luncheon Members had opportunities to meet and talk with a large cross section of the Lithuanian leadership. After lunch the delegation visited the radio and television tower, the site of most of the armed violence and bloodshed in Vilnius on January 13. Soviet Internal Ministry troops still occupy this facility and were there in force with armored personnel carriers.

Tallinn, Estonia
Thursday, February 14, 1991

Meeting with Arnold Ruutel, Chairman of the Estonian Council

Problems with bus transportation and poor weather conditions resulted in the delegation's late arrival in Tallinn and, as a result, in a much shorter program than originally planned. The delegation was forced to miss its first scheduled meetings with the Mayor of Tallinn, Andres Kork, the Chairman of the Citizens Congress of Estonia, Tunne Kellam, and all three Baltic Health Ministers, who were in Tallinn in connection with the shipment of U.S. private humanitarian medical aid under the auspices of Project Hope. Upon arrival, the delegation proceeded directly to the Presidential Palace, where it was received by Chairman of the Supreme Council of Estonia, Arnold Ruutel. Also in attendance were Deputy Supreme Council Chairman Marju Lauristin and Minister Endel Lippmaa. Ruutel welcomed the delegation, thanking them for the resolutions and joint resolutions passed by the Congress in support of the Baltics, for 50 years of the non-recognition policy, for not handing over Estonian gold to the Soviet Union after the World War II, and, finally, for undergoing the hardships of the journey in order to visit the Baltic States at this time of crisis. In Ruutel's opinion, such trips and the general expression of outraged world opinion after the violence in Lithuania and Latvia were the only things which had prevented similar violence in Estonia.

After these welcoming remarks, Chairman Ruutel described his recent proposal for a bilateral protocol on negotiations which he had presented to President Gorbachev. The essence of the protocol is that Moscow recognize immediately that Estonia is an independent country, i.e., recognition is a precondition of negotiation, not a subject of negotiation. Upon such recognition negotiations would proceed on the transfer of all-union enterprises to Estonian ownership, on the status of Russians and the protection of their rights in Estonia, on the status of Soviet military bases on Estonian territory and on any other such issue of mutual interest. Ruutel had handed the proposal to Gorbachev a few weeks earlier but had, as yet, received no reply. Indeed, it had proven impossible up to that date even to make contact with the commission which Gorbachev had appointed to deal with the Estonian negotiations. Ruutel expressed the opinion that

Moscow would ultimately bow to world pressure and begin negotiating, but he felt that any negotiations would be impossibly protracted. For this reason, Ruutel declared that the only genuine possibility for Estonia to succeed in dealing with the Soviets is under the protection of an international organization such as the United Nations.

Ruutel concluded his remarks by discussing briefly the March 3 plebiscite and March 17 referendum. He stated that Estonia would not be participating in the March 17 all-union poll because it did not concern them, inasmuch as they did not consider that they were a part of the country conducting the poll. The Estonian plebiscite of March 3 was being held, according to Ruutel, to "clarify the situation." Ruutel stressed that there was no legal requirement to have such a vote, because the Soviets had written Estonia into their constitution in 1940 without ever considering Estonian public opinion. In the March 3 vote every person registered to live in Estonia, with the exception of military personnel stationed there, will have the right to cast a ballot. Ruutel pointed out that such conditions were far more liberal than the conditions mandated by the United Nations in the plebiscite on independence in the Western Sahara. However, Estonia cannot wait for United Nations action in this matter, and, therefore, "we're letting everyone vote."

At the end of the meeting delegation members had the opportunity to speak briefly with several visiting American representatives of Project Hope about the shipment of humanitarian medical aid to the Baltics.

Other Meetings in Tallinn

Although transportation problems had forced the contraction of the Tallinn program, the Estonian Parliament made up, at least in part, for missed opportunities by expanding the guest list for the luncheon which it hosted in the delegation's honor. Members therefore had a chance to talk with leaders of the Congress of Estonia, the government of Estonia and members of the minority faction in parliament.

After a brief tour of the historic old town, the delegation took a commercial flight from Tallinn back to Stockholm, where it boarded the U.S. Air Force plane for the flight into Moscow.

VISIT TO MOSCOW

February 14-15, 1991

I. OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the visit to Moscow was to meet with Boris Yeltsin, Chairman of the Russian Parliament, to express the appreciation of the delegation and, by extension, the American people for his defense of the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of the Baltic States. The delegation also wished to hear Yeltsin's views on the situation in the Baltics, the status of their bilateral negotiations with Russia, and prospects for democratization in the USSR and resolution of the conflict between the republics and the center.

In addition, Members had wished to meet with President Gorbachev to express concern over the Kremlin's actions in the Baltics, but also to offer support for the steps he has taken toward democratization and greater personal freedom for the citizens of the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, Gorbachev was unable to meet with the delegation. However, a meeting was arranged with Rafik Nishanov, Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet's Council of Nationalities, the elected body theoretically tasked with dealing with inter-republic issues and policies.

II. THE CONTEXT

The events in the Baltic States in early 1991 have been covered in previous sections of this report. The reverberations of the bloodshed were felt throughout the Soviet Union, however.

In addition to Boris Yeltsin's condemnation of Soviet actions in Lithuania and Latvia, the Moldavian Supreme Soviet denounced Moscow's crackdown, the Presidium of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet unanimously condemned the use of force "against any nation," and several Belorussian deputies cabled their protest to Gorbachev. The Soviet action was condemned by the mayors of both Moscow and Leningrad. Father Gleb Yakunin, former political prisoner and deputy of the Russian Republic Supreme Soviet, conducted a memorial service in Moscow's Lyubyanskaya (KGB) Square for victims of the violence in Vilnius. Rallies in support of Lithuania were staged throughout the Soviet Union, including a rally by the Islamic Democratic Party of Dagestan in the North Caucasus.

On January 14 -- the day after the bloodshed in Vilnius -- President Gorbachev blamed local military commanders for initiating the attack on the television and radio center. In a subsequent statement on January 22, he lamented the loss of life, but tried to shift the blame to "radicals" in the Baltic States' governments. Ironically, Gorbachev was also attacked by the "enfant terrible" of the Soviet "right," Colonel Viktor Alksnis, who accused the President -- after planning to destabilize the Baltic governments and introduce Presidential rule -- of having lost his nerve and attempting to blame the military for his own failings.

Boris Yeltsin, of course, had strongly condemned Gorbachev's actions in the Baltics from the very beginning. In an address to the RSFSR Supreme Soviet on January 21, 1991, the Russian leader accused the Gorbachev government of violating the USSR Constitution by supporting the "Committees of National Salvation" in order to overthrow the democratically-elected governments in the Baltic States. In a quadripartite communique with the collective Baltic leadership, Yeltsin called upon the United Nations to help resolve the crisis.

It should be noted that Yeltsin has not endorsed in unqualified terms immediate independence for the Baltics. He has recognized their sovereignty and called upon Moscow to negotiate their leaving in good faith. He has been under some pressure to defend ethnic Russians who claim they are subject to discrimination as the Baltic States break away from Moscow. Careful not to distinguish between Balts or Slavs, Yeltsin has called upon soldiers of the Russian Republic not to fire upon the "peaceful citizens of the Baltics," nor to aid in the destabilization of the democratically elected parliaments (and by extension, the somewhat democratically elected legislature of Russia).

III. THE VISIT

The morning of February 15 began with a briefing by Ambassador Jack Matlock at the Ambassador's residence, Spaso House. Ambassador Matlock described the present situation in the Soviet Union and, in particular, the state of play between the central government and the Russian Republic.

The first official meeting was held in the Kremlin where the members of the delegation met with Rafik N. Nishanov, Chairman of the Council of Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet. The second meeting was with Boris Yeltsin in the Council of Ministers Building of the Russian Republic, overlooking the Moscow River. Between official meetings, some members of the delegation visited Yuri

Afanasyev, historian and reform leader (the "Democratic Russia" party) in the Congress of USSR Deputies. Afanasyev has been outspoken in his opposition to President Gorbachev's turn away from reform. Other members called on the Consul General of Israel, Aryeh Levin, to hear his assessment of the current status of Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union, as well as the general situation in the Soviet Union and prospects for Soviet-Israeli relations.

Following the meeting with Boris Yeltsin, the delegation held a press conference in an adjacent conference hall of the Russian Council of Ministers Building. The press conference had been originally scheduled to take place in the well-equipped press center of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), which includes booths for simultaneous interpretation, but permission for those premises was suddenly denied at mid-day. The official explanation was that the MFA press center was being held for the visiting Iranian Foreign Minister, but it was also clear that rivalry and poor communication between the Russian Republic (host for the delegation's visit) and the central authorities played a role.

IV. MEETINGS

Meeting with Rafik N. Nishanov, Chairman, Council of Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet

Chairman Nishanov, an Uzbek, was accompanied by the Council's Vice Chairman, Boris Oleynik, a Ukrainian. Other members of the Council included Georgi Tarasevich, Georgi Kryuchkov, Sergei Shuvalov, Nikolai Sychev, and Anatoly Denisov.

Chairman Nishanov and his colleagues were polite and receptive to discussion, and produced a defense of Moscow's Baltic policies that conformed to President Gorbachev's previously stated positions. There was little admission that mistakes had been made, other than to reiterate Gorbachev's January 22 statement regretting the loss of life, and his contention that violence is not the solution. Chairman Hoyer noted the improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations since Gorbachev's ascension to power, and expressed concern that the events in the Baltics would have negative effects on those relations.

According to Nishanov and his colleagues, the crisis in the Baltics has been caused by "radical nationalists" on one side and "conservatives" on the other, both of whom are trying to undermine perestroika. Gorbachev's policy, meanwhile, relies on legality and the Soviet constitution.

The United States and Soviet Union have different opinions on how the Baltic States became part of the Soviet Union, said Nishanov. Some parts of the Soviet Union entered voluntarily, others by force. The Baltic parliaments voted to enter the Soviet Union, and their delegations travelled to Moscow [in 1940] to petition for republic status. Now they must use the constitutional mechanism if they wish to depart.

The Soviet constitution must also apply in the Baltics States, Nishanov continued, to protect the rights of both Balts and the approximately 3 million non-Baltic peoples. There is also concern about "humanitarian" aspects of the situation, i.e., epithets are used against Russians such as "occupiers" and "bastards." Moreover, said Nishanov, the USSR has also provided the Baltic States with a vast quantity of technical resources. Deputy Shuvalov went further, claiming that there had been a high rate of illiteracy in Lithuania in 1940 when the Red Army arrived, and that the Soviet period had allowed many Lithuanians to attain higher education.

As far as the violence is concerned, Nishanov regretted the loss of life and decried the violence that he claimed came from all sides. Local forces made the decision, he said, and the guilty ones must be brought to account. The Supreme Soviet is investigating; a lot of groups must be held accountable for human rights violations.

Nishanov asserted that "we can't produce positive change immediately." He said that "people abroad see only our sore spots," and claim that this is a rollback of perestroika. "We seek support from Congress to keep our progress moving forward," he said, but warned that "internationalization of the Baltic situation" prevents resolution of the crisis. When Representative Durbin sought a promise on a time-table for Lithuanian independence, Nishanov rejected this "ultimatum," and said "we're not begging" for support from the United States.

Chairman Hoyer emphasized that Representative Durbin had expressed the feelings of the American people and most of the entire world, and called for a more realistic approach to the problem. Other Members reiterated the unavoidable linkage between Soviet actions in the Baltics and U.S.-Soviet relations, while noting certain legitimate security concerns of the Soviet Union in the Baltics.

In response to concerns raised by Representatives Hoyer, Ritter, Smith and Hertel about the continued occupation of the Vilnius radio and television tower by Soviet troops, Nishanov surprised the delegation by claiming that according to his

understanding, the troops surrounding the tower were under the control of the Lithuanian Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Representative Lantos then took the floor to compare the Baltics in symbolic significance of the use of Dr. Andrei Sakharov, whose release from exile demonstrated "new thinking" and reaped good will for the Soviet Union throughout the world. President Landsbergis presently enjoys the same moral authority as Sakharov in his day, said Lantos, and Soviet treatment of Landsbergis will therefore reflect either positively or negatively to the image of the Soviet government.

The delegation raised with Nishanov the question of the three "Shield" military officers who had been arrested in Vilnius earlier in the week, and requested information regarding their detention and prospects for release. Nishanov claimed not to be informed of this matter, but said he would look into it and get back to the delegation with a status report. (He did not, but before leaving Moscow the delegation learned from the newspaper that the three officers had, in fact, been released the very evening of the day on which President Landsbergis had brought the incident to the delegation's attention.)

In concluding, Nishanov claimed that delegations from the Supreme Soviet had tried to meet previously with Baltic delegations, but for a number of reasons were unable to do so. They hoped to meet the following week, however.

Meeting with Boris N. Yeltsin, Chairman of the Russian Supreme Soviet

Chairman Yeltsin welcomed the delegation and its interest in Russia. He expressed the view that the United States government should devote more attention to the affairs of Russia rather than the rapidly de-centralizing Soviet Union.

Chairman Hoyer began by welcoming the opportunity to have this long-sought meeting with Yeltsin. He commended Yeltsin on the risks he has taken, politically and otherwise, in defending the Baltic States, to which Yeltsin replied that any decent leader should expect to take risks. Yeltsin also maintained that by timely protest against the Soviet actions in the Baltics, the Russian parliament had prevented similar attacks on the reform movement in other parts of the Soviet Union and a return to the "sad times in our history" when millions had been killed.

But, continued Yeltsin, it is a question not only of the Baltic States, "but of serious problems of leadership in our country, when it is turning to the right and

freezing reforms and the process of democracy." Yeltsin stated that there was a "clear-cut rollback" of the principles of glasnost which Gorbachev had proclaimed in 1985, and that that process was being turned back. Russia, said Yeltsin, does not share this policy, but has a policy of reform in economic, political, legal and humanitarian spheres, and is making efforts to renew the Union. "So," said Yeltsin, "we cannot follow the current Soviet policy. The leadership of the United States does not know the real situation in our country sufficiently, nor does it know the processes of liberty and independence going on in our republics, processes which will lead to significant changes in our country and in the world."

Yeltsin, did, however, warmly support the delegation's initiative in visiting the Baltics. "We in the RSFSR," he said, "view your visit as a justified and necessary step" which "gave the Baltics a certain degree of assuredness that their rights as sovereign republics are being protected."

Chairman Hoyer replied that Yeltsin's commitment to democracy provided the basis for improvement in our bilateral relations, and expressed the hope that Yeltsin would have greater influence on the central leadership in the future. Senator D'Amato, praising Yeltsin for his support of the Baltic cause, noted that the consequences in the Baltics would have been a lot worse "without your personal intervention."

Senator D'Amato then extended Yeltsin a letter signed by seven Senators inviting him to visit the United States. Yeltsin replied that he appreciated the invitation, but made clear that he was no longer "simply a member of the opposition," as he had been when he visited the U.S. in 1989, but was now "head of a huge country of 150 million." Yeltsin noted that since he had been elected Chairman of the Russian parliament [in May 1990] he had not travelled abroad because he had focused on internal affairs. But now, he stated, "one of my first visits abroad -- naturally -- should be to the United States of America." Yeltsin said he hoped for an official invitation from President Bush, but would "also welcome" an invitation to visit the Congress. Chairman Hoyer offered to recommend that the President meet with Yeltsin and that the leadership of the Congress invite him to the United States. Yeltsin indicated that the "most convenient" time for such a visit would be in early April, "when Congress is in session."

In response to Members' questions on how the U. S. might best assist Yeltsin and other democratic forces in the separate republics, Yeltsin called for increased contacts with individual republics, such as the delegation's present visit. He also cited the recent visit of the Prime Minister of South Korea, who agreed that his country would sign agreements on "general themes" with the central government, but

conclude specific agreements, such as economic and cultural accords with the Russian Republic. The United States should follow the same course, said Yeltsin, through the creation of an "American-Russian" institute, as well as American institutes with other republics.

With regard to the overall situation in the Soviet Union and his personal antagonism with Gorbachev, Yeltsin said that the Russian Republic is continuing on the path of perestroika initiated in April 1985 [the date of the Party plenum generally cited by Soviet officials as the birth date of perestroika], while the Gorbachev government has done a "sharp turn to the right." "Because of this," said Yeltsin, "we cannot go parallel with the policies of the USSR". His attempts at reaching compromise with Gorbachev, said Yeltsin, had been unsuccessful, despite his best efforts.

Referring to the Baltic situation, Yeltsin reiterated the steps that he had taken to defend the democratically elected governments of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, such as his condemnation of the bloodshed, and call for UN help in finding a resolution. A treaty with Lithuania and the Russian Republic is being worked out, and mutual cooperation treaties between Russia and Latvia and Estonia have already been signed. Yeltsin commented that he had been criticized, unjustly, for allegedly abandoning ethnic Russians in the Baltic States, but noted that he had just visited Kaliningrad [in the RSFSR enclave separated from the rest of the Russian Republic by Lithuania] to reassure the Russian population that the accord with Lithuania would not be detrimental to them and that their legal rights would be protected.

In conclusion, Yeltsin renewed his call for the U.S. to deal directly with the republics. He called for direct U.S. trade and economic relations with the Russian Republic, especially in the area of food supplies and credits. Yeltsin said that because the "unpopular leadership of the country" cannot carry out radical reforms, the way out of this situation is to work through the republics. "We should not lose the momentum of democracy," Yeltsin urged the delegation in closing the meeting.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The delegation's meeting with Boris Yeltsin provided the opportunity for Members to express their appreciation for his support on an issue of major importance to the Congress and the American people. In addition, the Members had an opportunity to become acquainted with the aspirations of the Russian people through the statements of its parliamentary leader. The meeting with Rafik

Nishanov and his colleagues, however, reminded Members not only of the resistance that exists in the center to Baltic claims for independence, but of the continued reliance by many in the Party and central government apparatus on "old thinking" formulations and outright evasion by those opposed to responding to Western concerns on human rights issues.

APPENDIX A

ADDRESS BY REP. STENY H. HOYER

CHAIRMAN, U.S. COMMISSION ON SECURITY
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

TO THE PARLIAMENT OF LATVIA

FEBRUARY 12, 1991

President Gorbunovs, ladies and gentlemen, fellow parliamentarians. On behalf of all the members of my delegation, which represents both major parties and speaks for a broad spectrum of America, let me say how pleased we are to be here today and how sad we are to grieve with you the loss of your fallen patriots. We thank you for your kind invitation to come to Riga and to meet with elected representatives of the people of Latvia.

All of you became members of Parliament in the first election in Latvia since 1940 whose process was not controlled by one political party and whose outcome was not decided in advance. We salute and congratulate you. You are the living embodiments of the democratic spirit, all the more praise-worthy for persevering in uncharted waters and remaining hopeful and optimistic throughout.

This is my first trip to the Baltic States. In fact, most of the members of Congress you see have not been here before. Nevertheless, this is by no means just a "get acquainted" meeting. The U.S. Congress has had a longstanding interest in the Baltic States. This is particularly true of the Helsinki Commission, which is a unique, bipartisan body in the United States. It combines legislative and executive branch representation and is mandated by law to monitor implementation of the Helsinki Final Act by all of its signatories, including the United States. The Helsinki Commission has a tradition of close ties with Baltic political activists, many of whom have met with Commission Members in Washington, New York and at CSCE conferences in Europe.

Our presence here signals our commitment to your cause. As Americans we are very concerned about the war in the Middle East and the danger faced by our people in the Gulf. But we are deeply concerned about the unmistakable shift in Moscow's policies which has led to tragic consequences in Latvia and Lithuania. This shift has deeply troubling ramifications for U.S.-Soviet relations and hopes of creating a much longed-for "new world order." If the old world order was symbolized by the grim barrier enclosing Berlin, the new world order is reflected in the democratic forces at work in this room. For in this new world order we are talking about the basic rights and responsibilities of peoples and nations toward each other.

Our primary purpose in coming here is to gather information, to offer support for your magnificent and courageous strides toward democracy and freedom, and to demonstrate our solidarity with your goals. In our talks with you and with your counterparts in Lithuania and Estonia in the next two days we will learn -- and we know we will be inspired.

Your labors both reflect Helsinki ideals and nourish and nurture their spirit -- a spirit that brought political prisoners into political office and into dialogue with their former jailers. It is our belief that the Helsinki process -- which for years grouped around the table contending blocs in difficult and even bitter negotiation -- can provide the framework in which neighbors may sit with neighbors to address the sometimes conflicting needs of minority and majority populations.

For those of us who have long been active in the Helsinki process, the values enshrined in the Final Act and subsequent CSCE documents supply the guiding principles for international relations and the relationship between states and their citizens. These values include a firm commitment to human rights and to the right of peoples to self-determination. The Helsinki Commission welcomes the stated willingness of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to adhere to CSCE principles and has urged that they be granted observer status in the CSCE.

As you know, after concluding our visit to the Baltic States, we will meet with Boris Yeltsin in Moscow to gain his perspective on the Baltic situation and on prospects for promoting democratization in Russia and the U.S.S.R. I am sure you would agree that without democracy in Russia, democracy and freedom elsewhere are threatened.

We have been following the course of negotiations between the Baltic States and the Russian Republic and we consider it a hopeful sign that the Russian Republic appears ready to recognize the sovereignty of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. We look forward to establishing contacts with Mr. Yeltsin and to hearing his views on the future of relations between Russia and the Baltic States.

Our delegation has also requested a meeting with President Gorbachev. We hope that a favorable response will soon be forthcoming because we believe it would be extremely important for President Gorbachev and other political forces in Moscow to see that the U.S. Congress supports his efforts at democratization. But we are deeply concerned by his recent turn from his stated objective of a society under the rule of law.

We would urge President Gorbachev not to abandon the principles and policies that have earned him a role in history. Let me quote from his extraordinary address to the United Nations on December 7, 1988 in New York.

"It is also quite clear to us that the principle of freedom of choice is mandatory. Its non-recognition is fraught with extremely grave consequences for world peace. Denying that right to peoples, under whatever pretext or rhetorical guise, jeopardizes even the fragile balance that has been attained. Freedom of choice is a universal principle that should allow of no exceptions.

It was not simply out of good intentions that we came to the conclusion that that principle was absolute. We were driven to it by an unbiased analysis of the objective trends of today."

We hope that President Gorbachev's appointment of new negotiating teams to the Baltic States indicates a readiness to return to political means of resolving political problems. It would be a tragedy for everyone if he turned his back on his own legacy. Let us recognize anew that it is better to avert wrongs than to atone for them; it is wiser to keep friends than to lose them. And we hope to convey that message to President Gorbachev in person.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, we come to the Baltic States with full hearts and open minds. We mourn the innocent victims of January and we pray that our efforts to foster democracy, human rights and the self-determination of peoples will honor their memory. And we appreciate the opportunity to honor you -- their representatives, and our colleagues.

"Visu labāko Jums, un novēlu Jums Dieva svētību."
("All the best to you, and may God bless you.")